

SHAPED FOR SERVING GOD

Week 5

Today we're going to look at God's fourth purpose for our life, [we were Shaped to Serve God](#). The Bible says in [Ephesians 2:10](#), [For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do](#). We were made to make a contribution, not just to consume. God made us to make a difference. And what matters isn't how long we live, but how we live. What matters isn't the duration of our life, but the donation of our life. On this planet nobody gets a free ride. The Bible says we're created to serve, we're saved to serve, we're gifted to serve, we're shaped to serve. We're commanded to serve God back.

Now whenever God gives us an assignment to do something, He never gives it to us without equipping us first. Job 10:8 says, ["Your hands shaped me and made me."](#) God uses five things to shape us: **S**piritual gifts, **H**eart, **A**bilities, **P**ersonality, and **E**xperiences. That spells 'SHAPE'. Those five things make us, and God uniquely shapes us, different from anybody else in the world to serve Him. [1Peter 4:10](#) says, [Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others](#). Our talents are not for our benefit. Our purpose in life is to be what God made us to be. And He gave us gifts and talents and abilities and background and experiences and all these things for the benefit of other people, to be used by serving others.

The Bible has a word for this, it's called "ministry." And again, like worship and fellowship and discipleship, the words we looked at over the last three weeks, this is a misunderstood word. When I say the word "minister" most people think of priest, pastor. They think of somebody who wears a dog collar and a robe. But the Bible says every believer is a minister. Now, not every believer is a pastor, but every believer is a minister. Ministry simply means using our SHAPE to help somebody else in the name of God. Any time we use our talents, our abilities, our background, our experiences to help somebody else, that's called 'ministering'. And do you know what? We are all ministers. All women are ministers. All men are ministers. All children, all old people, if we're believers, we're all called to serve Jesus Christ. The good news is that God not only created us for service, He gave us a model. He came to earth Himself and said "This is how you do it. I want you to watch Me." He said in [Matthew 20:28](#), ["Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve."](#)

Our SHAPE (spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, experiences) determines our ministry, but our attitude, our servant heart determines our maturity. Big difference. I know of some people who work out their SHAPE, but don't get this second part down, and so that's what we're going to focus on. We're going to look at learning to serve like Jesus. And what does it take to be used and to learn to serve like Jesus? Well it takes three things:

- 1) Serving like Jesus means being [available](#);
- 2) Serving like Jesus also means being [grateful](#); and
- 3) Serving like Jesus means being [faithful](#).

1) [Serving Like Jesus means being available](#)

One day Jesus was walking down to go to Jericho [Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"...Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. \(Matthew 20:30-32\)](#) Jesus stopped. If we want to be used by God, if we want to serve God, we must be willing to be interrupted. Most of Jesus' ministry and most of Jesus' miracles were interruptions. All the people he healed - the blind man, the lame man, the sick people, the paralyzed man, the dead child - all of them were interruptions. His first miracle? Interrupted at a wedding. His second miracle? Interrupted on the way to Galilee. [Proverbs 3:28](#) says, [Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow"—when you now have it with you](#). Servant-hearted people don't procrastinate. They're spontaneous, they're sensitive, and they say "OK, let's do it!"

Here was John Wesley's motto: *Do all the good you can by all the means you can by all the ways you can in all the places you can and at all the times you can to all the people you can as long as you ever can*. And that's what it means to be shaped to serve God. We must be available. We must be willing to step out and say "OK, out of my comfort zone, God what do You want me to do?" There are hurting people all around us, and the wounded will not wait. We've got to help them now.

Now what keeps us from being available? Let me give three common barriers.

1. Self-centeredness. Whenever we see a need right in front of us, guess what? God is giving us the opportunity to practice serving. The number one enemy of compassion is busyness. We just get too busy! And because we're so busy, we don't have time to serve. "I've got my safe little life going here, so don't disturb me for the needs of other people."
2. Perfectionism. We want every thing to be perfect. You know, "When it's all just right, when things settle down, then I'll serve." Real servants, Christ-like servants, do the best they can with what they have for Jesus Christ today. They don't wait.

3. Materialism. We've got to decide whether we want to be rich or we want to be blessed. We get so busy taking care of things; we don't have time to take care of people. And that's a problem. The most important decision we're going to have to make in life once we become a believer is, "Am I going to be a kingdom-builder or am I going to be a wealth-builder?"

2) Serving like Jesus means being grateful

Why do we serve God with gratefulness? What do we have to be grateful for? Why do we serve God, not with a sense of duty, but with a sense of delight? Not out of a sense of obligation, but a sense of the great opportunity that He's given to us? We serve Him with gratefulness because He's given life to us through Jesus Christ. He saved us! And if He never did anything else for us, that is enough to be grateful for the rest of our lives to serve Him. Look at what the Bible has to say about that in [2 Timothy 1:9](#), (Jesus) [who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace](#). He saved us, and out of the gratefulness of that, what He has done for us, we serve Him. Now, as human beings, we tend to trip over ourselves on the way to serving God, on the way to this attitude of gratefulness. Here are some things that get in the way.

1. One of the barriers is comparing and criticizing. When we compare ourselves to others, when we criticize others, that is a barrier that gets in the way for all of us of being grateful. The Bible tells us in [Romans 14:4](#), [Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand](#). We're all His servants. And so it's a matter of His opinion, not my opinion or your opinion of one another. Competition with each other in service just doesn't make sense when you come right down to it. When you think about it, we're on the same team. And He's given us different abilities, different tasks. And to think that somehow we can compare or criticize in that is pretty ridiculous.
2. The second barrier is wrong motivations, our own wrong motivations. The Bible talks about this in [Matthew 6:1](#), Jesus said, ["Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven."](#) The wrong motivation of showing off. We're serving, but all the time we're serving, we're thinking about how noble we are. We're humble, but all the time we're humble we're thinking pridefully about how humble we are! Self-promotion and servanthood don't mix, but it's easy to get them mixed up. That's the struggle of service.

3) Serving like Jesus means being faithful

Faithful, now what does that mean? It means we don't give up. We keep on going. We don't quit in the middle of our assignment. At the end of Jesus' ministry on earth, He said this in [John 17:4](#), [I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do](#). Jesus was faithful in fulfilling His service. He didn't give up. He didn't give in. He was persistent. And if we're going to be like Jesus it means we're going to serve as long as we're alive. Now we may retire from our job someday, but we're never retiring from ministry. We're never retiring from service. Because God wants us to serve the rest of our lives.

So what motivates us to keep on going? The Bible says in [1Corinthians 4:2](#), [Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful](#). How are we to be faithful? What motivates us to stay faithful in serving God over the long haul? Three things, well, there are a lot of things. Being grateful for all the past that God's forgiven in our lives. If God never did another thing for us, we owe Him the rest of our lives for what He's already done for us. And then we think of trust and faith in future rewards. Jesus said, "You're going to be rewarded forever in eternity for what you do here on earth in serving Me by serving others." We're going to be rewarded. So we have gratitude for the past and we have faith in the future reward. We also know that what we're doing really matters. Now let's be honest, most of what we do in life doesn't matter. It isn't going to matter next week much less next year or next decade or in eternity. But any time we're serving in Jesus' name, no matter how small, it matters. The Bible says in [1Corinthians 15:58](#), [Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain](#). Nothing, even the little stuff. Why? Because in God's book, there is no little service. He said, "Even if you give a cup of cold water in my name to a child, that counts." In God's eyes, there is no little service.

Have you ever wondered why you're here at Vale Community Church or Lidlington Church? I'll tell you why. You're here because God knew you had something to give back. He didn't bring you here just to sit and soak and enjoy. He brought you here to serve. And He knew that you have something - background, talent, skill, ability, contact, network, or whatever, interest, hobby, whatever. God brought you here for a reason.

One day we're going to stand before God and He's going to say to us, "What did you do with what I gave you, the talents, the abilities, the background, the experiences, the freedom, the education, the family experiences? What did you do with your SHAPE?" More than anything else, I want God to say, "Good job! Well done! You did what I put you here on earth to do. You worshiped me, you fellowshiped with other believers, you grew in character to be like Christ, and you served Me, the way I shaped you. Well done! Good job! Come on in and enjoy eternity and all the rewards I've planned for you." **I want God to be able to say that about all of us, because we were shaped for serving God.**